

The University of Chicago

NATHANIEL WOOD'S *CONFLICT OF
CONSCIENCE*

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE
HUMANITIES IN CANDIDACY FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE
AND LITERATURE

1934

By
CELESTA WINE

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NATHANIEL WOOD'S *CONFLICT OF CONSCIENCE*

THE *Conflict of Conscience*, a morality play by Nathaniel Wood,¹ was printed in London, 1581, in a black-letter quarto. This is the only known edition of the work; it appeared, however, in two issues. The first of these gives the name of "Frauncis Spera" on the title-page and in the Prologue, and at the end of the piece the Nuntius announces that Philologus, the character representing the Italian, Francesco Spiera, had committed suicide. The second issue does not mention the name of the historical prototype of the chief character in the drama, and in it the Nuntius announces that Philologus had been reconverted to Protestantism before his death.²

So far as records go, *The Conflict of Conscience* was never acted. The arrangement of the characters on the title-page so that six actors could give a presentation of the piece "in priuate houses, or otherwise" seems to indicate that the author intended his work to be acted. As this arrangement is an accurate one, it needs must have been made by the author, or at least by someone very well acquainted with the play. In Act iv, scene i, the character Avarice is carefully made to leave the stage in order that he may later take the part of Sensual Suggestion.³ Furthermore, there are specific stage directions in at least four instances.⁴ Also, the Prologue speaks of the auditors,⁵ and Hypocrisy in two instances and perhaps in three addresses himself directly to his audience.⁶ On the

¹ The facts that are known of the life of Nathaniel Wood or Woodes, as the name appears on the title-page of his play, are limited. The record of his matriculation as a sizar at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, Michaelmas term, 1567, constitutes the first definite information about his life. He graduated B.A. from Cambridge in the spring of 1572 and M.A. two years later. In the meantime he was ordained priest at Norwich in 1571, and in 1572 he became rector of South Walsham St. Mary's, a small parish about nine miles from Norwich. In 1586 this living was given to another, and nothing is known of Wood's whereabouts until 1594, when he was incorporated at Oxford. After that time no more information regarding him is to be found. See John Venn and J. A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses* (Cambridge, 1922), iv, 453.

² William A. Jackson, "Woodes's *Conflict of Conscience*," *LTLS* (September 7, 1933), p. 592, points out the most important variations between the two issues. W. W. Greg in a later issue of *LTLS* (October 26, 1933), p. 732, corrects a bibliographical inaccuracy of Mr. Jackson's.

³ *The Conflict of Conscience*, Sig. F i verso.—This reference and all references to the play, unless otherwise stated, are made to the facsimile reproduction of a British Museum copy of *The Conflict of Conscience* in the "Tudor Facsimile Texts."

⁴ Two of these are on Sig. B iii verso; the remaining two are on Sig. C ii verso and Sig. D ii recto.

⁵ Both issues, Sig. A ii verso.

⁶ The unmistakable examples of this are in Act II, scene i (Sig. B ii verso) and in Act v, scene iii (Sig. H i verso), while the more doubtful example is at the beginning of Act iv, scene i (Sig. E i verso).

other hand, the numerous asides found in Act II, scenes ii and iii, and in Act III, scene iii, raise a question about the feasibility of acting the play. These asides are not incorporated into the stanza form, which is rhyme royal, nor does there, as a rule, seem to have been provision made for them by means of any pause in the stanza.⁷ They simply appear in the margin parallel to the speeches about which they are comments. In spite of this curious arrangement, it seems a not unreasonable assumption that Wood intended his play for presentation. Whether or not it ever really was acted cannot be determined.

The date of composition cannot have been earlier than 1548, when the events upon which the plot of the play is based occurred, nor later than 1581, when the play was printed. The exact source of the play did not appear until after 1550.⁸ It is, furthermore, very unlikely that Nathaniel Wood, who entered Cambridge in 1567, was old enough to have written such a work before 1553, since he probably was only a few years old then; and during Queen Mary's reign, 1553-58, it is improbable that any one would have written a work so definitely anti-Catholic. The work, then, was not written before Queen Elizabeth's accession to the throne. Nor were the events of the early years of Queen Elizabeth's reign likely to call forth such a play as *The Conflict of Conscience*, for during the first few years of that reign there was uncertainty as to the status of the Catholics. There was, moreover, a decline in English Catholicism between 1560 and 1570, because the Catholics were left so without leadership that they could not publicly make a definite stand.⁹

About 1570, however, the situation of the Catholics in England changed considerably. The Northern Rising of 1569, the excommunication of 1570, the coming of the first Catholic missionaries in 1574, the menace of Mary, Queen of Scots—all contributed to the rise of a pronounced opposition. This showed itself after a time not only in laws against the Catholics, but in anti-Catholic literature written and published during the seventies and the eighties. Many of the works were ballads which came out soon after 1570 in protest against the events of that year.¹⁰ Besides the ballads a considerable number of tracts were

⁷ The difficulty of acting a play with asides arranged in this fashion was pointed out to me by Professor Charles Read Baskervill. A. W. Ward, *A History of English Dramatic Literature* (London, 1899), I, 139, considers the use of the seven-line stanza to be evidence that the play was hardly intended for presentation. But a considerable number of the early plays were written in the seven-line stanza.

⁸ See below pp. 670-672, where I have attempted to show that Wood used a specific version of the life of Spiera.

⁹ A. O. Meyer, *England and the Catholic Church under Queen Elizabeth*, translated by J. R. McKee (London, 1916), pp. 68-70.

¹⁰ Such a ballad is Thomas Knell, *An Answer at large, to a most hereticall, trayterous, Papistical Byll*, . . . (London, 1570), reprinted in Northampton, 1881, by John Taylor.

written and published against the Catholics.¹¹ Furthermore, some of the dramas printed during this period are strongly anti-Catholic.¹² New translations were made of anti-Catholic works which had been published earlier in some language other than English,¹³ and new editions were issued of earlier anti-Catholic works, as about 1570 the second edition of an English account of Francesco Spiera.¹⁴

It seems altogether likely that *The Conflict of Conscience* had its place in this stream of Elizabethan anti-Catholic literature which perhaps increased in volume after 1570. Nathaniel Wood was then at Cambridge, and may have written his play while still at the university—that is, sometime before 1574—or he may have written it afterward when he presumably was in the vicinity of Norwich. In either case, he probably was stirred to a consideration of the history of Spiera as a basis for the plot of a dramatic piece by the reappearance of the English account of the unfortunate Italian. He may also have been conscious of the timeliness of a treatment of such a theme; consequently, using the life of the Italian lawyer as the source, he wrote his play, certainly not earlier than, and probably at least a few years later than, 1570.¹⁵

In view of the fact that Nathaniel Wood on the title-page and in the Prologue of the first issue of *The Conflict of Conscience* states that his play deals with the story of Francesco Spiera,¹⁶ there can be no doubt concerning the general historical source. Spiera, who was born in 1502, was a lawyer in the small town of Citadella, near Padua, Italy. When in his middle forties, he became converted to Protestant doctrines, and was so zealous in his declaration of his new faith that complaints of his heresy came to the tribunal at Venice. He and his nephew, Girolamo

Other ballads of this type are reprinted by Joseph Lilly, *A Collection of Seventy-Nine Black-Letter Ballads and Broad-sides* (London, 1867), pp. 30–32; 33–36; 224–227. H. E. Rollins, "An Analytical Index to the Ballad-Entries (1557–1709) in the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London," *SP*, xxi (1924), 14, 23, 84, 107, *passim*, has entries of ballads that obviously must have been of the type under discussion here.

¹¹ For example, Thomas Norton, *A warning against the dangerous practices of Papistes, and specially the parteners of the late Rebellion* (London, [ca. 1570]). Many of the earlier of the numerous works against the Catholics of the Puritan, William Fulke, fall in this period.

¹² A good example is *New Custom*, which was printed in 1573. This is reprinted in Robert Dodsley, *A Select Collection of Old English Plays* edited by W. C. Hazlitt (London, 1874–76), iii, 1–52.

¹³ Barnaby Googe's translation of Thomas Kirchmeyer, *The popish kingdome, or reigne of Antichrist* (London, 1570) is an example. This work has been reprinted and edited by Robert Charles Hope (London, 1880).

¹⁴ See below, p. 667.

¹⁵ A feature of Wood's play that seems to point to the later date is the Scottish dialect chosen for the ignorant Catholic priest. This choice may have been influenced by the increasing uneasiness among English Protestants on account of Mary, Queen of Scots. See below, p. 677–678.

¹⁶ This surname is sometimes spelled Spira or Spera.

Faccio, were summoned before that body. During the trial, which began May 25, 1548, Spiera's deviation from the Catholic teaching became apparent; for, among other things, it was proved that he had in his possession heretical writings. Spiera feared that he would lose his property and possibly even his life; therefore, in June he made a confession of his errors and begged for clemency. The papal legate at Venice at that time, Giovanni della Casa, Archbishop of Benevento, did not consider Spiera's confession sufficient evidence of his sincerity, but required that, besides the usual recantation in St. Mark's in Venice, he should make a public recantation in his native town. The same sentence was pronounced upon his nephew. In addition they both were required to pay a fine; Spiera paid his on July 1, while Faccio paid his in August. After this there is no more mention of Faccio.

On the way back to Citadella Spiera's conscience urged him to remain true to what he really believed, but he refused to be guided by it; and the following Sunday morning after mass, before a large group of people, he said that he formerly had erred in his beliefs and that he now was returning to the Roman church. Soon after he began to feel remorse for what he had done, and thought he heard a voice telling him that he had denied Christ and must therefore suffer eternal torture. From this time on Spiera sank into a state of despair from which he could not be aroused. After he had been in this condition some time, it was decided to remove him to Padua, where he might have the care of physicians as well as the aid of learned men. When he arrived in Padua the three foremost physicians in the town were called, but after a consultation they said that they could offer no advice since they considered his mental condition to be the cause of his physical disorders.

Thereafter every effort was made to arouse Spiera from his melancholy state of mind. Every day many people came to comfort him. Among the most noted of his visitors were Pietro Paola Vergerio, Matteo Gribaldi, Henry Scrymgeour or Scrimger, and Sigismund Gelous. These men were much impressed by the seriousness of Spiera's conflict, and they made strenuous attempts to inspire in him confidence in the mercy of God. But he seemed convinced that he was a reprobate and that his sin was unpardonable; consequently, he could find no consolation in the Scriptures or in prayer, since those things were for the elect. Spiera's condition daily grew worse. He longed to die, and actually tried to commit suicide by starving himself to death. He grew more and more weak, though forced to eat some food. In November, 1548, it was decided that he should be taken back to Citadella. The morning he was to leave Padua he attempted to kill himself with a knife, but was prevented from carrying out his intention by his two sons. He died in

Citadella, December 27, 1548. The details of his death were not accurately known; it was thought that his despair had not been relieved.

Within approximately two years after Francesco Spiera's death there had been published descriptions of his apostasy and the despair that followed it by the four men already mentioned who came to see him while he was at Padua. Of these men Vergerio and Gribaldi were Italians, Scrymgeour was a Scotsman, and Gelous was a Hungarian.¹⁷

It seems to be impossible without actually comparing all the extant biographies of Francesco Spiera that were published near 1550 to form any accurate judgment as to their relationship. The most important of these works, however, was the one which bore the title:

Francisci Spierae, qui quod susceptam semel Evangelice ueritatis professionem abnegasset, damnassetque, in horrendam incidit desperationem, Historia, A quatuor summis uiris, summa fide conscripta: cum clariss. uirorum Praefationibus, Caelii S. C. et Io. Calvini, et Petri Pauli Vergerii Apologia. . . . Accessit quoque Martini Borrhai, de usu, quem Spierae tum exemplum, tum doctrina afferat, iudicium . . .¹⁸

The importance of this work lay in its completeness. There were 181 pages in all, which contained: the preface by Celio Secondo Curione,¹⁹ six letters written by an anonymous Paduan—really Pietro Paolo Vergerio—translated by Curione (pp. 1–32); the epistle of Matteo Gribaldi (pp. 33–56); a preface by John Calvin (pp. 57–61); a history by Henry Scrymgeour (pp. 62–95); a history by Sigismund Gelous (pp. 96–124); the apology of Pietro Paolo Vergerio relative to the case of Spiera, translated out of Italian by Francis Nigro Bassianate (pp. 125–144); the opinion of Martin Borrhause,²⁰ from which it appears that he was the editor of the whole collection; and finally an index to the volume.²¹

Some of the various accounts that made up this collected work were published separately just before and just after its publication. For example, there was an Italian history by Vergerio; there was a Latin version of Vergerio's history;²² there was the Latin narrative written by

¹⁷ Brief accounts of these men may be found as follows: *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* (New York and London, 1912), XII, 164–165; *Biographie universelle ancienne et moderne* (Paris, 1817), XVIII, 472–473; *DNB* (London, 1885–1900), LI, 150–151; *Fortsetzung und Ergänzungen zu Christian Gottlieb Jöchers allgemeinem Gelehrten-Lexikon* von Johann Christoph Adelung (Leipzig, 1787), II, 1389.

¹⁸ *Corpus Reformatorum* (Brunswick, 1870), XXXVII, lxx, gives the title as above. Emilio Comba, *I Nostri Protestanti* (Florence, 1897) II, 260, note, gives the place and the date as Basel, 1550. The *British Museum Catalogue*, under C. S. Curio, lists a title very like this, but the place and the date supplied are [Geneva? 1550?].

¹⁹ Curione (1503–69), an Italian Protestant, was professor of rhetoric in Basel.

²⁰ Borrhause (1499–1564), a German Protestant, was professor of theology in Basel.

²¹ *Corpus Reformatorum*, XXXVII, lxx–lxxi.

²² *British Museum Catalogue* under P. P. Vergerio.

Henry Scrymgeour; finally there was an anonymous Latin history of 1549.²³ Of the early German descriptions of Spiera's desperation one is based upon the last mentioned Latin work; the other one, like the first one, is dated 1549.²⁴ There also was an early English version of Matteo Gribaldi's description of Spiera's apostasy. This bore the title:

A notable and marvellous epistle of the famous Doctour Mathewe Gribalde, professor of law in the universitie of Padua cōcerning the terrible iudgement of God, upon hym that for feare of men denieth Christ, and the knowne veritie: with a Preface of Doctor Caluine. Translated out of Latin intoo English by E. A. Worcester [Printed by John Osmen.] 1550.²⁵

That Edward Aglionby made the translation into English is clear from the acrostic in "An Epigram of the terrible example of one Francis Spiera an Italian, of whom this book is compiled."²⁶ Aglionby was a recorder of Warwick and was a figure of some importance during the middle years of Queen Elizabeth's reign.²⁷

These early accounts of the fate of Francesco Spiera by men of some prominence in the Protestant world must have been a considerable factor in producing the great vogue that the tale seems to have had all over Europe. At least two of the four men who wrote accounts of their experiences with Spiera attributed their final decisions in favor of Protestant doctrines to the impressions made upon them by Spiera's miserable condition. These two were Vergerio and Scrymgeour. The Protestants considered the story of Spiera a prime example of the fate likely to overtake a person who, having once had the truth of the Protestant doctrines revealed to him, turned his back on that truth because of worldly considerations. Spiera was soon reported to have committed suicide, although the early narratives did not give warrant for such a report. The vogue of the story was probably also enhanced by the appeal that the sin of despair resulting in suicide—really the unpardonable sin, the sin against the Holy Ghost, since hope of repentance and ultimate salvation were thereby cut off—had to the sixteenth-century mind.²⁸ The vogue of the story did not, however, end with the sixteenth century, but continued through the following centuries.

²³ *British Museum Catalogue* under F. Spira.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ This title is taken from Mary Augusta Scott, *Elizabethan Translations from the Italian* (Boston and New York, 1916), p. 253. A copy of this edition of Gribaldi's work in English is to be found in the Bodleian Library. The *Catalogus Librorum Impressorum Bibliothecae Bodleianae in Academia Oxoniensi* (Oxford, 1843), II, 200, does not give the place where the work was printed nor the printer.

²⁶ Scott, *Elizabethan Translations*, p. 254.

²⁷ *DNB*, I, 176-177.

²⁸ F. I. Carpenter, "Spenser's Cave of Despair," *MLN*, XII (1897), 257-273. Literary treatments of the theme of despair occur in Spenser's *Faerie Queen*, Book I, canto ix, and in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, notably scenes v, vi, xi, xiii, xiv.

Evidence for this great vogue is found, first of all, in the new editions that appeared of the early biographies of Spiera and in the new notices of him that also appeared.²⁹ Another edition of the early volume of collected writings regarding Spiera was brought out at Tübingen in 1558.³⁰ Comparatively brief notices were incorporated in such Latin works as Sleidan's *Chronicle* and Peter Martyr's *Common Places*. In addition there were at least two more sixteenth-century accounts in German, other than those already mentioned,³¹ and there were later narrations of the story of Francesco Spiera in German.³² The publication of a biography of him in French does not seem to have occurred very early as compared with the appearance of such works in other countries, but there was a brief notice in Simon Goulart's *Histoires admirables et memorables de nostre temps*, the first part of which was published in 1600, and there were at least two seventeenth-century accounts of Spiera.³³

In England also there is ample evidence in the appearance of histories of Spiera's case for the vogue of the story there. The early translation of Gribaldi's story came out in a second edition; the title-page reads:

A notable and marueilous Epistle of the famous Doctour, Mattheue Gribalde, Professor of the Lawe, in the Vniuersitie of Padua: cōcernyng the terrible iudgement of God, vpon hym that for feare of men, denieth Christ and the knowne veritie: with a Preface of Doctor Caluine. Now newly imprinted, with a godly and wholesome preseruative against desperation, at all tymes necessarie for the soule: chiefly to be vsed when the deuill dooeth assaulte vs moste fiercely, and death approacheth nighest . . . Imprinted at London, By Henry Denham, for William Norton.³⁴

The date usually given for this work is about 1570, a conjecture which is based on the fact that the work was entered in the Stationers' Register between July 22, 1569, and July 22, 1570.³⁵ The *Godly and Wholesome Preservative against Desperation*, printed with this second edition, had appeared independent of *A notable and marueilous Epistle* in two earlier editions, one in 1551, another in 1559.³⁶ The author of this tract is not known. Yet a third edition of *A notable and marueilous Epistle* has been

²⁹ The following list of works that dealt with Spiera's life is by no means complete. It is drawn up chiefly as evidence of the widespread popularity of the story.

³⁰ Comba, *I Nostri Protestantii*, II, 261, note.

³¹ Jean George Théodore Graesse, *Trésor de Livres rares et précieux* (Dresden, 1865), VI, 468; *British Museum Catalogue* under F. Spira.

³² For example, C. L. Roth, *Francesco Spiera's Lebensende* (Nuremberg, 1829).

³³ *British Museum Catalogue* under F. Spira.

³⁴ This title is taken from a rotograph of the British Museum copy.

³⁵ Edward Arber, ed., *A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London; 1554-1640 A.D.* (London, 1875), I, 408.

³⁶ *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books* edited by A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave (London, 1926), nos. 20204 and 20205.

recorded as having been printed at London "by Jhon Kyngston for Wilyam Norton, 1582,"³⁷ but the present existence of this edition can not be very well substantiated.³⁸ Other sixteenth-century works in English which carried notices of Francesco Spiera were the translations of two Latin works already mentioned, Sleidan's *Chronicle* and Peter Martyr's *Common Places*, the dates of these translations being 1560 and 1583 respectively. Thomas Lanquet's *Chronicle*, 1565, also contained a brief notice. It is interesting to note that in no one of these versions of the story was Spiera said to have committed suicide.

An additional translation into English of a foreign work was that of Simon Goulart's work, the French title of which has been given, by Edward Grimestone. The English title of this work is *Admirable and Memorable Histories containing the wonders of our times*.³⁹ It has in it a section devoted to the description of various "Desperate Persons."⁴⁰ These persons are described as having become so desperate by thinking over their past sins that they come to doubt the efficacy of God's mercy. Among these stories appears that of Francesco Spiera. The source for the statements made about him is given as "a discourse published by Maister Henrie Scringer, a learned lawyer, who was then at Padoua, did see and many times talke with this poore Spiera."⁴¹ In some places the narrative in Goulart's work is in the first person singular, as if it were a verbal translation of Scrymgeour's discourse.

By far the most important version in English of the circumstances attending Spiera's apostasy and death is that of Nathaniel Bacon, whose work came out in London, 1638, bearing the title, *A Relation of the fearfull Estate of Francis Spira* in the year 1548.⁴² This work went through a number of editions, the last of which appeared in 1845. There was also a translation of the work into Welsh.⁴³ In Nathaniel Bacon's preface to his work he intimated that he had used as his sources all of the early narratives by eye-witnesses of Spiera's conflict. He apparently knew of the sixteenth-century translation of Gribaldi's sketch, for he wrote:

³⁷ W. T. Lowndes, *The Bibliographer's Manual of English Literature*, edited by H. G. Bohn (London, 1871), II, 945. It is also described in Joseph Ames, *Typographical Antiquities* edited by T. F. Dibdin (London, 1819), IV, 481-482. Dibdin notes that the description comes from Herbert's manuscript memoranda.

³⁸ There is no record of this third edition in the *Short-Title Catalogue*.

³⁹ The first edition, London, 1607, is the edition I have used.

⁴⁰ Pp. 185-198.

⁴¹ Goulart, *Admirable and Memorable Histories*, p. 196.

⁴² The *British Museum Catalogue*, under F. Spira, supplies the date 1637 in brackets. I have not seen a copy of the first edition but have used the second edition which has the title: *A Relation of the Fearefull Estate of Francis Spira, in the year, 1548* (London, 1640).

⁴³ The dates of the various editions (*British Museum Catalogue*, under F. Spira) were: 1638 [1637], 1640, 1665, 1683, 1688, 1715, 1718, 1734, 1770, 1784, 1815, 1845. That of 1815 seems to have been an abridgement of Bacon's history. The title and approximate date of the Welsh translation are also given.

I acknowledge that there hath beene formerly a Booke published in our Mother tongue, concerning this subject, but as farre as I can learne (for I could never yet obtaine to see any of them) it was nothing so large and various as this present Treatise, and as I have heard, a translation of onely one of the Tractates, from whence I had gathered this present Discourse in part.⁴⁴

The many editions of English works about Francesco Spiera attest the vogue of his story, but there is further proof of that vogue in the incidental references that were made to him in letters and in sermons, as well as in works of a more formal nature. Usually his story is held up as a warning against apostasy, as an illustration of a person who has committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. He is named in sermons along with other persons notorious for similar sins—such persons as Lot's wife, Pharaoh, Judas Iscariot, Nero, and Julian the Apostate.

The Conflict of Conscience was not the only literary treatment of the theme of Francesco Spiera's apostasy and despair. There were, notably, two other plays. The earlier was an obscure German play, written by an equally obscure Johannes Reinhard, bearing the title: *Eine wunderliche Geschichte, Francisci Spierae, wie er inn Verzweyflung kommen, und in der selbigen gestorben sey*. It was printed by Johannes Daubman at Königsberg in 1561.⁴⁵ This dramatic piece probably had no connection whatever with Wood's treatment of the same theme. Furthermore, the German work was even more mechanical and wooden than the English work. Reinhard made use of conventional dramatic motifs, one of which is the bringing of infernal spirits into the action. He assigned to the character of Spiera tedious speeches, whether he was discussing the theological problem of good works or giving expression to his repentance.⁴⁶ The second play was a French tragedy, *Francois Spera, ou le Désespoir*, printed in 1608.⁴⁷ The author is unknown, but the dedication is signed I.D.C.G. and is made to Claude Boucart, at one time professor of philosophy at Lausanne.⁴⁸ The tragedy is in verse and in five acts with choruses and no scene-division. Its plot seems to be a faithful reproduction of the story of Spiera in its essential features. Like the German play, this work seems to have no connection with *The Conflict of Conscience*, and to be of little merit, for it is described as a work "*qui est des plus mauvais*."⁴⁹

⁴⁴ *A Relation of Francis Spira*, Sig. A 3 recto.

⁴⁵ I have relied upon Karl Goedeke, *Grundriss zur Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung* (Dresden, 1886), II, 393, for the title and the facts regarding the publication of this work.

⁴⁶ Wilhelm Creizenach, *Geschichte des neuen Dramas* (Halle a.S., 1923), III, 326–327, gives the best discussion of this play that I have found.

⁴⁷ There seems to be question regarding the place where this work was printed. The *British Museum Catalogue*, under G., I.D.C., gives the place as [Paris?], while Jacques-Charles Brunet, *Manuel du Libraire* (Paris, 1865), VI, 899, gives it (Genève).

⁴⁸ Louis César de la Baume Le Blanc, *duc de La Vallière, Bibliothèque du Théâtre français* (Dresden, 1768), I, 418–419, gives the best description of this tragedy. ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 418.

In England there probably was a ballad which dealt with the story of Francesco Spiera, for in the Stationers' Register under the date of June 15, 1587, John Charlewood is listed as having paid four pence "for printinge *A ballad of master FFRAUNCIS an Italian a Doctor of Lawe who denied the lord JESUS &c.*"⁵⁰ This ballad seems not to have survived.

The subject of Francesco Spiera's despair was still live enough to inspire a poetic treatment of it by a miscellaneous writer of the latter half of the nineteenth century, James Hain Friswell.⁵¹ Among Friswell's many publications was a volume, printed in London, 1865, bearing the title *Francis Spira, and other poems*.

Obviously Wood could have got the outline of the story from many sources: he could have used Latin, Italian, and German tracts; he could have pieced his play together from all the various narratives concerning Spiera that were available to him. He seems, however, to have done the simplest thing he could, to have used one version of the history of Spiera; namely, the English translation of Gribaldi's work made by Aglionby and called *A notable and marueilous Epistle*. Two editions of this work, of 1550 and about 1570, had appeared before the publication of Wood's play in 1581. Although it cannot be definitely proved that Wood used the second edition of about 1570, he is more likely to have used that one, since it came out while he was a student at Cambridge.

That Wood did use *A notable and marueilous Epistle* can be seen from the verbal parallels between the two works. These are very close in spite of the fact that it is in prose, while *The Conflict of Conscience* is in rhyme royal. Two brief parallels will suffice.

The Conflict of Conscience

But it as easely may be done, as you
may with one spoone,
At once take vp the water cleane,
which in the seas abide:
And at one draught, then drink it vp,
this shall ye doe as soone,
As to my brest of true beleefe, one
sparkle shall betide:

Tush, you which are in prosperous
state, & my paines haue not tried
Doe think it but an easy thing, a sinner
to repent
Him of his sinnes, and by true faith,
damnation to preuent.

A notable and marueilous Epistle

But this is euen as possible as to
take the whole water of the sea, in one
spoone, and to drinke it vppe at a
draughte. . . .

You that are in blessed estate suppose
thys an easie thing to be done, that a
sinner reknowledging his fault, may
lift vp himselfe to hope and faith to-
wards God, and therefore ye exhort
me, for as much as ye see me re-

⁵⁰ Arber, *Stationers' Register*, II, 472.

⁵¹ DNB, xx, 277-278.

The healthfull neede not Phisicks
 art, and ye which are all haile,
 Can giue good counsell to the sick,
 their sicknesse to eschew;
 But here alas, confusion, and hell,
 doth mee assaile,
 And that all grace, from me is reft, I
 finde it to be true.
 My heart is steele, so that no faith,
 can from the same insue.
 I can conceiue no hope at all, of pardon
 or of grace,
 But out alas, Confusion is alway be-
 fore my face. (Sig. I i recto)

I pray you answer me herein, where
 you by deepe dispaire,
 Say, you are worse here in this lyfe,
 then if you were in hell,
 And for because to haue death come,
 you alway make your prayer,
 As though your soule and body both,
 in torments great did dwell:
 If that a man should giue to you a
 sword, I pray you tell,
 Would you destroy your selfe there
 with? as doe the desperate,
 Which hange or kill, or into floods,
 themselues precipitate.

Philologus.

Giue me a sworde, then shall you
 know, what is in mine intent.

Eusebius.

Not so my friend, I onely aske, what
 heerein were your will?

Philologus.

I cannot, neither will I tell, wherto I
 would be bent. (Sig. I iii recto)

pentaunt and sorowful, that I would
 conceiue some hope and trust to rise
 againe: The helthfull hath no neede of
 a Phisition: and he that is whole, can
 soon giue counsell to the sicke. But
 herein an I tormented: this is my hel,
 this is my confusion and desperation,
 that I knowe all / grace to be taken
 from me, that I feele my heart hard-
 ened, that I can not beleue nor hope
 any thing at all of the atonement and
 mercie of God.

(Sig. B v recto-verso)

Maister Frauncis, I praye you aun-
 swere me: for as much as through vtter
 desperation, ye saye, that in this lyfe
 ye are worse, than if ye were with the
 dāpned folke in hell: and for as much
 as I see you cōtinually to wish for
 death, that ye might go to hell, as
 though now, / bothe your body and
 soule were in more painefull torment,
 as yee doe opēly wytnesse. I demaūd
 of you, if ye had a sworde in your
 hande: would ye kyll your selfe (as all
 desperate persones for the moste part
 doe) that haue sticked themselues with
 weapon, or strangled themselues by
 hanging. Then saide he, giue me a
 sworde, and ye shalt see what I will
 doe. Nay (sayde I) I doe but desire you
 to shewe vs your will: I can not tell
 (saide he) neyther can I saye what my
 will thē should be.

(Sig. C ii recto-verso)

There are many other passages in *The Conflict of Conscience* that can be
 shown to have been taken almost directly from this source.⁵²

⁵² Other parallels may be found as follows:

Conflict of Conscience

Sig. G ii recto-verso

Sig. H ii recto-verso

Sig. H ii verso-H iii recto

Sig. H iii verso

A notable and marueilous Epistle

Sig. A vi recto-verso

Sig. A vii verso

Sig. A viii recto-verso

Sig. B i recto-verso

Although Nathaniel Wood used *A notable and marueilous Epistle* as the source of the main part of *The Conflict of Conscience*, more than half of the play seems not to have a definite source. Gribaldi's work has not even a suggestion in it for the entire first scene of Act I, and the mass of the material in the early part of the play is not found in the narratives concerning Spiera.

This material comes from what may be called conventional sources. The play teems with illustrations and passages taken from the *Bible* and with references to Biblical characters and incidents, sometimes retelling of some parable or scene,⁵³ sometimes mentioned in such a way as to suggest the details of the stories.⁵⁴ Often in this first part of the play there are woven into the text verses from the *Bible*, altered very little in order to fit the stanza.⁵⁵ There appear also fairly exact references to various books of the *Bible*, as sources either of statements made or of additional material on the subject being discussed.⁵⁶ It is quite probable that in many cases Wood did not go directly to the *Bible*; he merely used texts that had already been rephrased in discussions of various theological and ethical problems. Very probably he did not have any one discussion in mind; he merely made the usual explanations of perplexing questions, and for such he would not need an exact source.

That Wood's themes and treatment of them are the usual ones can be seen by a comparison of passages from his work with passages from

Sig. H iii verso—H iv recto

Sig. H iv recto

Sig. H iv verso

Sig. H iv verso

Sig. H iv verso—I i recto

Sig. I i recto

Sig. I i verso

Sig. I i verso

Sig. I ii recto

Sig. I ii recto-verso

Sig. I ii verso

Sig. I ii verso

Sig. I iii recto

Sig. I iii verso

Sig. I iii verso

Sig. I iv recto

Sig. B i verso

Sig. B ii recto

Sig. B ii verso

Sig. B iv recto

Sig. B iv verso

Sig. B iii verso

Sig. B vi recto-verso

Sig. B vi verso—B vii recto

Sig. B vii recto-verso

Sig. B vii verso—B viii recto

Sig. B viii verso

Sig. B viii verso—C i recto

Sig. C i recto-verso

Sig. C ii verso—C iii recto

Sig. B ii verso

Sig. B v verso

I have already briefly pointed out Wood's dependence upon *A notable and marueilous Epistle* in a letter in *LTLS* (November 23, 1933), p. 840.

⁵³ *Conflict of Conscience*, Sig. A iii recto and Sig. B ii recto.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Sig. B i recto; the whole page is dotted with names of Biblical characters.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, Sig. B ii recto, where Romans 5 : 3-4 is quoted, and Sig. F iii verso, where Matthew 10:28 is the verse that is quoted.

⁵⁶ *Conflict of Conscience*, Sig. A iv recto, B i recto, and B ii verso.

other writings of the period. In *The Conflict of Conscience*, Act I, scene ii, Mathetes asks Philologus to discuss

The cause why God doth such afflictions sende,
Into his Church.⁵⁷

Of course the sixteenth century had no monopoly upon discussions of the question, why the righteous should suffer adversities. Interest in that problem is older than the Book of Job. But the people of the sixteenth century lived in troublous times, and many who attempted to exemplify in their lives what they thought to be truth and righteousness were called upon to suffer hardships on that account, so that it is not to be wondered at that frequent efforts were made to draw up reasonable explanations of God's affliction of the righteous. Sometimes these take the form of treatises dealing with it alone;⁵⁸ sometimes they take the form of chapters or sections of some longer work.⁵⁹ Philologus, in complying with the request of Mathetes, gives at least nine reasons why the righteous must suffer affliction, and then Mathetes summarizes these.⁶⁰ That the explanation of the question of God's purposes in afflicting the righteous which Philologus and Mathetes work out is made up of current ideas on the subject can be deduced from the fact that almost all of the reasons given in the play can be found in other works of the period. In the first place, some of the chapter headings of Coverdale's *A Spiritual and Most Precious Pearl* show that the lines of argument used are similar to those used in *The Conflict of Conscience*.⁶¹ Furthermore, there are passages to be found in the literature of the time which present ideas parallel to those in Wood's play.⁶² It is possible to multiply instances of parallel ideas between *The Conflict of Conscience* and contemporary treatises on theological subjects, particularly on the questions of the supremacy of the pope and of the sacrament.

A third source of conventional material that Wood used is made up of

⁵⁷ Sig. A iv verso.

⁵⁸ Miles Coverdale, "A Spiritual and Most Precious Pearl" in the *Writings and Translations of Myles Coverdale*, edited for the Parker Society by George Pearson (Cambridge, 1844), pp. 84-194.

⁵⁹ Roger Hutchinson, "The Image of God," Chapter XI, in *The Works of Roger Hutchinson*, edited for the Parker Society by John Bruce (Cambridge, 1842), pp. 57-60; John Marbeck, *A Booke of Notes and Commonplaces* (London, 1581), pp. 18-20.

⁶⁰ *Conflict of Conscience*, Sig. B i verso-B ii recto.

⁶¹ Coverdale, *Writings*, pp. 95, 116, 123, 127, 129.

⁶² Some passages which are notably like those in *The Conflict of Conscience* are as follows: Marbeck, *A Booke of Notes and Commonplaces*, p. 19; Pietro Martire Vermigli, *The Common Places* (London, 1583), II, 366 b; John Veron, *A stronge battery against the Idolatrous inuocation of the dead Saintes* (London, 1562), fol. 5 recto; Henry Bullinger, *The tragedies of tyrants* (London, 1575), fols. 115 verso and 117 verso.

anti-Catholic works of all kinds. The sections of *The Conflict of Conscience* which seem to draw most freely on anti-Catholic literature are Act I, scene i, and Act III, scene iv. The first is a monologue of about three pages in which Satan describes his present plight and lays plans for the future. Since his domination in the world is being threatened, he must introduce measures by which it can be maintained. Satan boasts of mischief he had perpetrated in times past, and claims the pope as his son. In conclusion Satan says this son, the pope, has two champions, Avarice and Tyranny, and now a third helper is to be Hypocrisy. This whole passage is full of echoes from anti-Catholic works. Satan's plans for the overthrow of Christ's kingdom, the description of the pope as a child of Satan, and the pope's alliance with tyranny, avarice, and hypocrisy are common features of anti-Catholic treatises as well as of other anti-Catholic dramas.⁶³ As is usual in such works, avarice is considered to be the especial vice of the clergy. The Catholic priest in *The Conflict of Conscience* is conceived of as being so bent upon increasing the commercial value of his position that he wishes the sacraments might be sold to the people who, he is sure, would gladly pay thirty pence for them.⁶⁴ This conception of the priest is not peculiar to Wood, for the character, Lucifer, in an earlier anti-Catholic work, predicts that the clergy will not be ashamed to sell the masses for money.⁶⁵

The delineation of the Catholic priest in *The Conflict of Conscience* as an exceedingly ignorant person is also owing at least in part to the anti-Catholic literature of the time. In several of Bale's works the ignorance of the Catholic priests is stressed.⁶⁶ A passage in Pierre Boaistuau, *Theatrum Mundi, the Theatre or rule of the world*, a translation from French, presents a Protestant conception of the Catholic priest that is similar to the character of Caconos, the priest in Wood's play.⁶⁷ Furthermore, the Catholic priest is so often represented as a lover of ale⁶⁸ that it seems

⁶³ See John Bale, *A declaration of Edmonde Bonners articles* (London, 1561), Sig. * ii recto, fols. 12 recto, 24 recto, 55 recto, 62 verso, *passim*; "A Comedy concerning Three Laws of Nature, Moses and Christ" and "A Tragedy of John, King of England" in *The Dramatic Writings of John Bale*, edited by J. S. Farmer (London, 1907), pp. 1-82 and 171-294; "Lusty Juventus" and "New Custom" in Hazlitt's *Dodsley*, II, 41-102 and III, 1-52; and the recently discovered *Fable of Philargyrie*, printed by Robert Crowley and probably written by him, which has been published in facsimile with a short introduction by W. A. Marsden (London, 1931).

⁶⁴ *Conflict of Conscience*, Sig. D iii verso-D iv recto.

⁶⁵ Bernardine Ochino, *A tragoedie, or Dialogue of the vniuste vsurped primacie of the Bishop of Rome* (London, 1549), Sig. X i verso.

⁶⁶ *A declaration*, fol. 20; *Three Laws*, p. 41.

⁶⁷ Boaistuau's work was translated by John Alday, and the first edition was published about 1566, according to the *Short-Title Catalogue*, no. 3168. The edition I used was published in London, 1581. The passage referred to is to be found on p. 115.

⁶⁸ Kirchmeyer, *The popish kingdome*, fol. 18 verso; Luke Shepherd, "Doctour Double Ale" in *Remains of Early Popular Poetry of England* edited by W. C. Hazlitt (London, 1866), III, 307, 311, *passim*.

reasonable to conclude that Caconos' statement, "Ay had rather han a cup af nale than a Testament,"⁶⁹ is a conventional Protestant idea of the extent of the ignorance and corruption of a Catholic priest. When Caconos is enlarging upon the fact that he cannot read his breviary but must depend upon the pictures for his knowledge of what is in the book, he gives a lengthy speech in which some of the saints are mentioned together with their beneficent qualities. After this speech Tyranny says,

What? this Parson, seemeth connyng to be,
And as farre as I see, in a good vniformytie:
Yea, he is well red, in that golden Legend.⁷⁰

Caconos then explains that he gives the *Golden Legend* more credence than he gives the New Testament, for the former is authorized by the pope, while the latter is in part forbidden. This attitude of Caconos toward the *Golden Legend* is in keeping with the attitude attributed to the Catholics toward that work in anti-Catholic works.⁷¹

Furthermore, this passage shows Wood's use of another conventional source of material, the *Golden Legend*. As in the case of the *Bible*, it is very possible that Wood did not go directly to the *Golden Legend* for his material, but that it is the ultimate source is obvious from Tyranny's quick recognition of Caconos' comments as coming from that source. Moreover, a study of the lives of the saints that appear in the *Golden Legend* does in a considerable number of cases show reasons for the attribution to them of the particular beneficent qualities which Caconos gives them. This is especially notable in regard to St. Sylvester, St. George, and St. Rocke.⁷² Since, however, not all of Caconos' statements concerning the saints are to be found in the *Golden Legend*, Wood doubtless had some source other than it, but it is fairly obvious that some of the material is very close to the *Golden Legend* and has ultimately to be traced to that source.⁷³

There seems to have been a tendency on the part of Protestants to consider Catholics as unduly devoted to astrology.⁷⁴ Wood makes use of this opinion when he has Hypocrisy, who is one of the pope's helpers, give a long monologue in Act II, scene i, in which he describes the influences

⁶⁹ *Conflict of Conscience*, Sig. D iv recto.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, verso.

⁷¹ See Thomas Becon, *Prayers and Other Pieces*, edited for the Parker Society by John Ayre (Cambridge, 1844), pp. 234, 519, 535; John Jewel, *Works*, edited for the Parker Society by John Ayre (Cambridge, 1845-50), I, 265; IV, 816; James Pilkington, *Works*, edited for the Parker Society by James Scholefield (Cambridge, 1842), p. 18.

⁷² Cf. Jacobus de Varagine, *The Golden Legend or Lives of the Saints as Englished by William Caxton*, edited by F. S. Ellis (London, [1900]), II, 199-201; III, 133; V, 3.

⁷³ In Bale's *Three Laws*, pp. 19-20, there is a similar list of saints and the benefits they bestow upon men; but Bale is very obviously letting his character ridicule such ideas, while Wood intends Caconos to be seriously stating his beliefs.

⁷⁴ Kirchmeyer, *The popish kingdome*, fol. 44 recto-verso.

of the various planets upon the natures of those born under their signs. He is particularly explicit in his description of his own nature.⁷⁵ Hypocrisy's entire monologue illustrates further Wood's dependence upon conventional material which can be traced to an ultimate source. The source in this case is the encyclopedic work on medieval science by Bartholomæus Anglicus which had been translated into English by John of Trevisa in 1397. Here again it is a question whether Wood ever used the actual text of Bartholomæus, or may not more probably have used some of its ideas that were current.⁷⁶

Wood also makes a considerable use of another type of conventional material—proverbs. Sometimes he incorporates into the text of his play proverbs in complete and formal statements;⁷⁷ sometimes he gives proverbs in their exact Latin forms and then translates them more or less elaborately; and in at least one instance he uses a Latin proverb for which he gives no translation.⁷⁸ On the other hand, he sometimes merely alludes to familiar proverbs or uses proverbial ideas which seem not to have taken the fixed form of proverbs.⁷⁹ He also uses a considerable number of proverbial expressions which are often intended to be comic.

Wood's use of proverbial literature, of astrological ideas, of saints' lore, of anti-Catholic literature, of current treatments of theological and ethical problems, and of the *Bible* shows that, where he could not depend upon his chief source, *A notable and marueilous Epistle*, his work abounds in ideas that were the common stock of many Elizabethan writers.

The Conflict of Conscience, although called a comedy on the title-page, was clearly intended to be a moral play, and in general shows the structure and main features of that type. The author's statement in the Prologue that comedy must not touch particularly the vices of one private man and that the law of decorum must be observed in presenting scenes of mirth is, however, an indication of classical precedent.⁸⁰ Furthermore, the work is divided into acts and scenes, the latter usually according to the classical principle that the entrance or exit of an important character makes a new scene. Thus the drama, although a fairly late survival of the moral play, bears marks of the transition that was taking place.

On the whole Wood followed his principal source, *A notable and marueilous Epistle*, closely. His versification of it made necessary minor changes in the order of words as well as additions and omissions of words. But Wood also made some alterations not necessarily called for metri-

⁷⁵ *Conflict of Conscience*, Sig. B iii recto.

⁷⁶ See Batman vppon Bartholome, his Booke *De Proprietatibus Rerum* (London, 1582), fol. 131 recto-verso (Book VIII, Chapter 27), fol. 352 verso (Book XVIII, Chapter 21).

⁷⁷ *Conflict of Conscience*, Sig. A ii verso, C ii verso, C iv recto, D ii recto, verso, F iii verso, F iv recto, verso.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, Sig. B iii verso, B iv recto, C iii recto, C iv recto.

⁷⁹ This is especially notable in the Prologue.

⁸⁰ *Conflict of Conscience*, Sig. A ii verso.

cally, but showing that he had a sense of discrimination. He omitted descriptive passages, tiresome repetitions, some theological discussions, some Biblical illustrations, and a few incidents, the most notable being the actual recantation of Philologus, which is narrated in the source.⁸¹ If Wood omitted some parts of his source, he also added material even in the sections of the play that are close parallels to the source. Such additions are of Biblical material or are details about persons mentioned or subjects discussed. Finally he added a summary of what he considered the purpose of the whole play to be.⁸² Occasionally he rearranged matter taken over from the source, the new order usually being more dramatic.

The most interesting use that Wood made of his source was his development of minor parts of it into larger aspects of the play. The scene in which Philologus teaches his friend Mathetes (Act I, scene ii), the trial scene (Act IV, scene i), and that which portrays the conflict between Conscience and Sensual Suggestion (Act IV, scene iii) all seem to have been developed from hints in *A notable and marueilous Epistle*.

Besides the characters Wood took over from his source, he also created characters from slight suggestions in it. Such are Mathetes, Caconos, Spirit, Conscience, Horror, and the sons of Philologus, Gisbertus and Paphinitius. Furthermore, the line which Wood followed in developing Philologus as a man fond of talk, fond of discussing serious questions, was probably prompted by John Calvin's description of Spiera in the preface to Gribaldi's narrative.⁸³ Thus Philologus is transformed from a particular Italian lawyer into a universal type. Wood also aimed to develop Theologus and Eusebius into such types, but less happily.

Most of the remaining figures in the drama are characterized conventionally. Caconos, however, is not a conventional figure, although the idea that the Catholic priests were ignorant and most of the matter of Caconos' talk have been shown to have been current in anti-Catholic literature. Nor is Caconos remarkable because he speaks in a dialect. There were earlier examples of characters who spoke in dialect, a well-known one being that of Hodge in *Gammer Gurton's Needle*. But Caconos is unusual in that he speaks a dialect that is intended to be Northern, presumably Scottish.⁸⁴ The appearance of this dialect used by a Catholic priest is the origin of the plausible idea that Wood is intending to ridicule

⁸¹ *A notable and marueilous Epistle*, Sig. A vii recto.

⁸² *Conflict of Conscience*, Sig. I iii verso-I iv recto.

⁸³ *A notable and marueilous Epistle*, Sig. A iii recto.

⁸⁴ Eduard Eckhardt, *Die Dialekt- und Ausländertypen des älteren Englischen Dramas* (Louvain, 1910), I, 94-97, has made a study of the dialect of Caconos. His conclusions are that Wood probably intended Caconos to speak Scottish, but that Wood must have known the dialect very imperfectly, for while Scottish and Northern forms predominate, there are also many Midland forms in Caconos' dialect, as well as many that are invented.

Mary Queen of Scots.⁸⁵ It is, however, also possible that Wood's conception of the character of Caconos may have been suggested or at least strengthened by events in the history of the diocese of Norwich, for in 1571 Bishop Parkhurst had considerable trouble with a clergyman in his diocese who was a Northern man and who gave ample evidence of great ignorance and of leanings toward the papacy.⁸⁶ These characteristics are also those of Caconos; thus it seems not unreasonable that Wood, who was ordained at Norwich in 1571 and received a living near there in 1572, may have known of Parkhurst's difficulties with this clergyman and may thus have found the prototype of his Catholic priest. However that may be, Caconos seems to be the most original of Wood's characters.

Since the facts of Nathaniel Wood's life are meager, and his only known work is *The Conflict of Conscience*, it is the only evidence upon which any estimate of his ability can be based. Apparently Wood was able to recognize a good story, for the biography of Francesco Spiera does have appeal even now, and that appeal must have been much greater in the sixteenth century. Wood then tried to fit the tale into the moral play. In the story of Spiera he saw possibilities for morality figures, and developed these with some adroitness. The form was a decadent one, but it was a suitable vehicle for the dramatist's purpose, to show "which is the truth of Christ," and to teach "the wauering fayth, on which side to persist."⁸⁷ Wood was not without some skill in molding his source material into a morality. He carefully welded together conventional morality features and characters with his original source. He effectively carried through the play his conception of the character of Philologus. He brought in some realistic touches which lent to the whole work a little glow of life, and succeeded in giving to a few of his episodes some of the "honest mirth" promised in the Prologue. Wood nevertheless failed to bring *The Conflict of Conscience* much above a level that could have been reached by any quick-witted university man of his day. He was hampered by his theological inclinations and by the controversial nature of his subject.

CELESTA WINE

Oak Park Junior College

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 94; Louis B. Wright, "Social Aspects of some Belated Moralities," *Anglia*, LIV (1930), 114, note 1.

⁸⁶ John Strype, *The Life and Acts of Matthew Parker* (Oxford, 1821), II, 85-97.

⁸⁷ *Conflict of Conscience*, Sig. I iv recto.

